

CLAIMS

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of forming a panel comprising:
forming a flexible skin 22;
coupling a compressible material 24 to the skin 22;
positioning the skin 22 and compressible material 24 in a mold;
forming a rigid substrate 20 around the skin 22 and compressible material 24 providing a first soft region 12 wherein the compressible material 24 is disposed between the skin 22 and the substrate 20 so that a first soft region 12 is defined by the compressible material 24.
2. The method of Claim 1 wherein the substrate 24 comprises a molded polymer material.
3. The method of Claim 2 wherein the skin 22 is formed by vacuum forming and trimming a sheet.
4. The method of Claim 3 wherein the sheet is thermoplastic olefin.
5. The method of Claim 4 wherein the compressible material 24 is a foam material.
6. The method of Claim 5 wherein the foam material is a closed cell foam.
7. The method of Claim 5 wherein the foam is bonded to the skin 22.
8. The method of Claim 5 wherein the skin 22 comprises a flange 30 and the substrate 20 is molded to at least partially encapsulate the flange 30.

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9. The method of Claim 1 wherein the panel is a vehicle door trim panel
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10. The method of Claim 1 wherein the skin 22 is formed, then the compressive material 24 is coupled to the skin 22, then the substrate 20 is molded to the skin 22 and foam 24.
11. The method of Claim 1 wherein a second soft region is defined by a portion of the skin 22 in direct contact with the substrate 20.
12. The method of Claim 1 wherein the step of forming the substrate 20 comprises injection molding a plastic material